Autumn girls' hoop season gets mixed reviews

Girls' basketball -- traditionally a winter sport in the Seminole District -- is for the first time this year an autumn sport in the district of which Appomattox, Rustburg and Buckingham are part.

How do the coaches of the girls' basketball teams feel ab out this break with tradition?

The coaches of the three teams surveyed in this issue have mixed feelings.

Coach Haywood McCrickard of Rustburg High School and Coach Shirley McDaniel of Buckingham are, perhaps, unique among Seminole District girls' basketball coaches this year.

McCrickard, who coaches the boys' varsity basketball squad at Rustburg High School in the winter, sees at least one advantage to the new season. "With the girls' season in the fall, the girls have the gymnasium to themselves (for practice) now," notes the coach.

At Buckingham High School, points out Buckingham coach Shirley McDaniel, the players and fans are used to autumn girls' basketball seasons.

Last season, the first for Buckingham in the Seminole District, was the first time the Lady Knights had played basketball in the winter.

The change was made to bring the Seminole District into conformance with the rest of the AA schools in Virginia. For years, the Seminole District has had its girls' basketball seasons in the winter, concurrent with the boys' seasons.

Since basketball is a winter sport, it seemed only natural that the girls should compete at the same time as the boys.

The only drawback was that, after the Seminole District tournament, the local teams could go no further, regardless of their records, in state competition because the rest of the AA schools in the state held their girls' basketball seasons in the autumn.

The change to a Seminole District autumn girls' basketball season was effected this year. And, as McCrickard points out, it does have certain pratical advantages, beyond the fact that it will allow Seminole District teams to compete in post-season statewide tournament play.

However, for some, such as Appomattox coach Mary Tolley, the change has met with a less-than-favorable reception.

"I'm not very happy with the new season," says Tolley. "I just feel like we're playing the sport out of season."

"I understand the advantage of being able to advance further in post-season tournament play.....but there are drawbacks, too," she adds.

Tolley points out that the new season has necessitated a change in the days on which girls' basketball games are played, from Tuesdays and Fridays to Tuesdays and Thursdays.

"Tuesdays and Thursdays are bad days for games, because that schedule only gives you one day to prepare for the second game of the week," Tolley notes.

"Mondays and Fridays are bad days for practice, so you feel like you only get one good day of practice each week, and you feel like you have to do all your preparation before the season starts."

Tolley notes that an additional problem this year with the new girls' basketball schedule has been that there was less response, particularly on the

(Continued on page 14)

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Raiderettes off to a fast start

Coach Mary Tolley's varsity Raiderettes got off to a b ooming start last week with wins over Gretna and William Campbell in the first week of girls' varsity basketball play.

Last Tuesday's 54-43 win over Gretna saw Raiderette Ruby Smith score 26 points, and Thursday's 35-33 win over William Campbell saw Smith score 21 points, including a game-winning layup with five seconds remaining in the fourth overtime period.

Smith's performance is typical of what Coach Mary Tolley says is her team's greatest strength this year.

"As usual, we don't have much height," says Tolley. "But we are quick, and the girls have shown a lot of hard work and determination in practice," according to Tolley.

Smith, a junior, is one of eight players returning from last year's team which compiled a record of 12 wins and 6 losses in the tough Seminole District, and 13 wins against 7 losses overall.

Seniors Rhonda Jaggars, Lolita Preston, and Angie Murray are b ack from last season's team, according to Tolley.

Jaggars averaged six points per game last season and was the leading rebounder, with more than seven per game, on the average.

Tolley notes that Jaggars attended basketball camp this summer, which improved her game. The coach says that Jaggars has shown more aggressiveness on the court thus far this year.

Lolita Preston, another senior, is also on this season's squad. Tolley expects that the four-year basketball veteran will play an important part offensively and defensively on this season's squad, with her quickness and leadership abili-W.

Ruby Smith, last year's leading scorer with an average 20.8 points per game, is expected to show improved defensive play this year, according to Tolley.

Other juniors returning with Smith are Kim McGrath, Robin Martin and Cheryl Wilkins.

Sophomore Sandra Watkins saw time on Tolley's varsity squad as a freshman last year and has returned this season.

Newcomers to the squad this year include Suzan Eye, a junior, as well as sophomores Kaye Browne, Janet Thomas, and Lisa Pannell.

Tolley says that in early season practive, McGrath, Watkins, Brown, and Eye, all taller girls, have looked good and should see action this season.

Tolley believes that Rustburg and Liberty will be the teams to beat this year in Seminole District girls' basketball.

"Rustburg lost practically no one," the coach notes. "They (the Rustburg team members) have been together for the most part for five years," the coach continues. "Most of them are seniors, and they're always tough."

The Raiderettes will meet Rustburg twice this season, midway through the season on Sept. 29, then again at the end of the season, on Oct. 29.

Tolley adds that Liberty lost some of their players from last year's squad, but has two big girls returning to play this season.

The Raiderettes placed third in the Seminole District regular season standings last year, and lost in the second round of the district tournament to Rustburg's Lady Red Devils.

THE 1981 VERSION OF APPOMATTOX COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL RAIDERETTES varsity basketball team: (Kneeling, from left) Angie Murray, Ruby Smith, Rhonda Jaggars and Lolita Preson; (Standing, from left) Cheryl Williams, Janet Thomas, Lisa Pannell, Kim McGrath, Kaye Brown, Sandra Watkins, Suzan Eye, Robin Paulette, and Coach Mary Tolley. Not shown in photo is manager, Kellie Tolley.

Cuccio

Wealth of experience

Gary M. Cuccio, Appomattox County High School's new varsity head football coach, comes to the Raiders with a wealth of football experience.

The 29-year-old Florida native began his football career early, in a very active little league program in metropolitan Miami.

At Hialeah Senior High School, a school with an enrollment of 4,600, Cuccio was involved in post-season play in both his sophomore and junior years.

After high school Cuccio received a full scholarship to attend Appalachian State University, where he played linebacker and defensive end.

Throughout all of his playing days, Cuccio experienced only one losing season.

For three years after graduating from college, Cuccio worked as a defensive coach at Faquier High School, which in 1976 compiled a record six shut-outs in the tough AAA Commonwealth District of Northern Virginia.

In 1977, he became head coach at Rockbridge High School in Fairfield, Va., where he steered the team to its first winning season in four years.

Off the field, Cuccio was active in raising money to provide the team with a modern weight room, establishing a sound junior varsity football program, and encouraging and receiving community support in the high school football program.

Cuccio, who has located in Concord, says he is "very excited about being in Appomattox."

He says he is very pleased with the quality of the team members and with his assistant coaches.

"We're all very excited about the season's prospects," he concludes.

GARY M. CUCCIO

Raiderette Basketball Schedule

Date	Team	Place	Time
9-1	Gretna	Home	8
9-3	Wm. C.	Home	8
9-8	J. Forest	Away	8
9-10	Nelson	Home	8
9-15	Altavista	Away	8
9-17	Brookville	Home	8
9-22	Liberty	Away	8
9-24	Buckingham	Away	8
9-29	Rustburg	Home	8
10-1	Gretna	Away	8
10-6	Wm. C.	Away	8
10-8	J. Forest	Home	8
10-13	Nelson	Away	8
10-15	Altavista	Home	8
10-20	Brookville	Away	8
10-22	Liberty	Home	8
10-27	Buckingham	Home	8
10-29	Rustburg	Away	8

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